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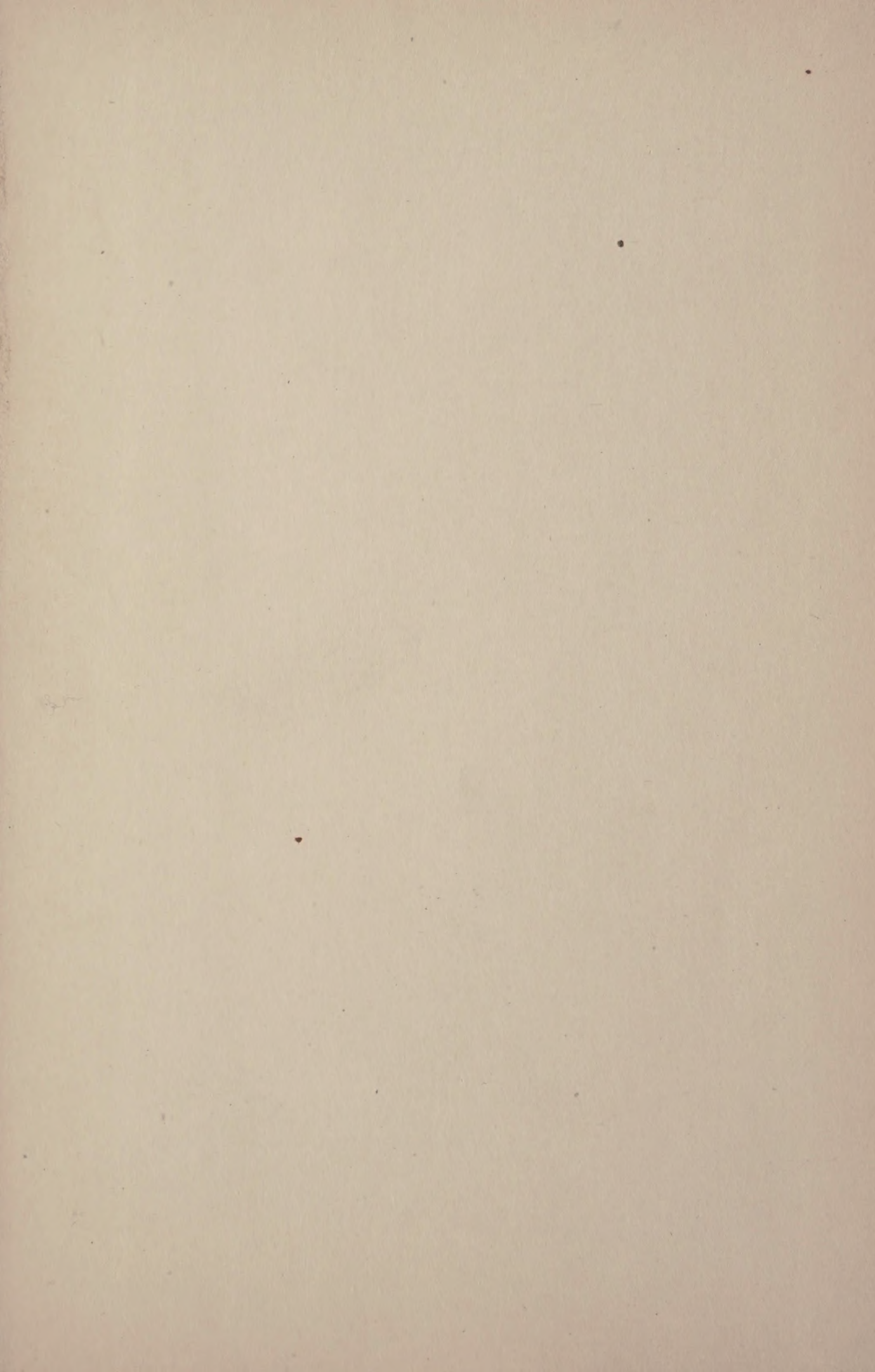
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HOLLOW
TREE
STORIES

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH
By Albert Bigelow Paine

Reserve Storage



Good wishes to all
Hallow Tree friends

From the Story Teller

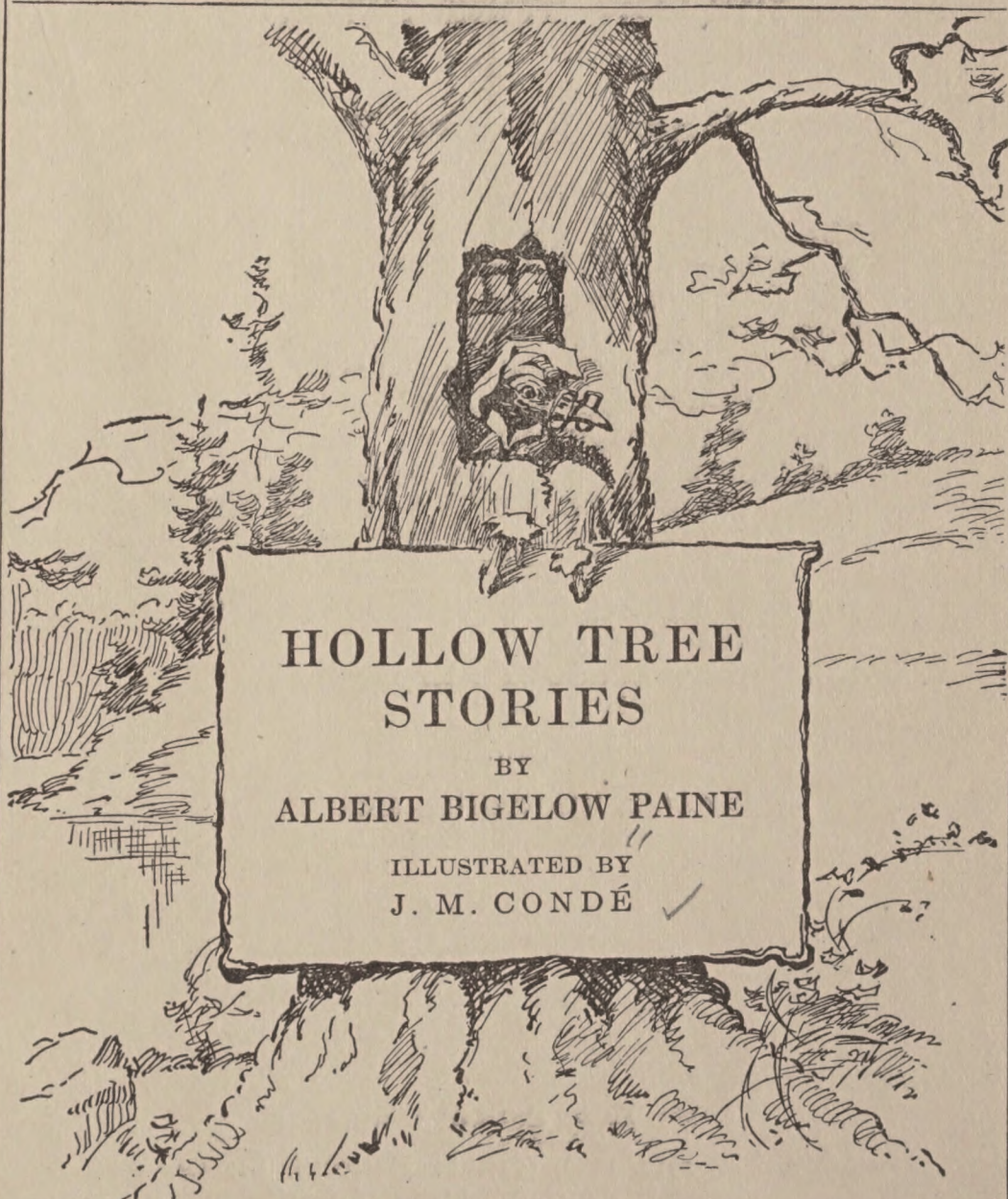
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[See page 13]

MR. CROW AND MR. RABBIT WENT BACK
TO THE FENCE JOB

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH



HOLLOW TREE STORIES

BY
ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

ILLUSTRATED BY
J. M. CONDÉ

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

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HOLLOW TREE STORIES

BY

ALBERT BIGELOW PAINE

12mo, Cloth. Fully Illustrated

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MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

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MR. 'POSSUM'S GREAT BALLOON TRIP

WHEN JACK RABBIT WAS A LITTLE BOY

HOLLOW TREE AND DEEP WOODS BOOK

Illustrated. 8vo.

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Illustrated. 8vo.

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK

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MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

I

THE OLD BLACK CROW TRIES A STRANGE EXPERIMENT

ONE very nice May morning when Mr. Crow went over to call on Jack Rabbit, he found him whitewashing his back fence, and after Mr. Rabbit had showed Mr. Crow how fine it looked when it was dry, he took him into the kitchen, which he had whitewashed the day before, and Mr. Crow went on about it and said it was the nicest thing he ever saw, and if he just knew how, and had the things to do it with, he would whitewash his own kitchen in the Hollow Tree.

Then Mr. Jack Rabbit said it was the

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

easiest thing in the world—that all one needed was a little quick-lime and some water and a brush, and then some practice in putting it on so it would look nice and even, and not spotty and streaky, as was so liable to be the case when one had not learned how. Mr. Rabbit said he had borrowed some quick-lime early one morning from Mr. Man's lime-kiln, over in the edge of the Big West Hills, and that Mr. Crow could get some at the same place if he went early enough and took a basket to bring it home in. Jack Rabbit said that you must put the lime into a barrel, or a tub, or something, and then pour water on it, which would make it hot and smoky, quite suddenly, which he supposed was the reason it was called quick-lime, but that by and by it would grow cool and turn white, when it was called "slack" lime, and then it only needed some more water to make the beautiful, clean whitewash which Mr. Crow admired so much. As for practice, he said, he would let Mr. Crow try a little on his back fence.

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

So then Mr. Crow and Jack Rabbit went back to the fence job, and Mr. Rabbit stirred the whitewash and dipped in the brush, and made a few strokes, right and left, and then crossed them up and down, and then right and left again, to get the material on nice and smooth, and stood off to look at it until it began to look white and clean, because the sun was hot and dried it very fast; and pretty soon he let Mr. Crow have the brush. Mr. Crow did very well for the first time, and kept improving right along, and Jack Rabbit sat in the shade, where it was cool, and let Mr. Crow go on practising and improving, until he had whitewashed almost all the fence, and felt so hot and warm he was about ready to drop, besides being dazzled from looking at the boards that got as white as snow, with the hot sun shining on them.

Then all at once Mr. Crow noticed something else. He had not been very careful about splashing the whitewash and had got some of it on different parts of himself, and

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

especially on the wing that he worked with, and when he stopped and looked at it, he said, "Good gracious!" for wherever the whitewash had got on him he was not black any more, but snow white.

And right then Mr. Crow had an idea. He put the brush in the pail, and came over and stood in front of Jack Rabbit, and said:

"Why can't you whitewash me? I've always thought it would be pleasant to be white, for a change. I heard of a white crow, once, in our family, and I always wondered how he got that way. Of course he must have been whitewashed—I can see it, now, as plain as anything. I am sure you could whitewash me, Mr. Rabbit, with all the practice you've had, so that none of the black would show. Whitewash me for Sunday, Mr. Rabbit, and I will go home and give Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum a great surprise."

Well, Mr. Rabbit was delighted. He dearly loved to try experiments, and prepare surprises, and to show how well he could do

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

things. He said he believed he had heard of people being whitewashed for Sunday, and that Mr. Crow, who was so nice and smooth outside, would be just the one to be fixed up in that way. He said Mr. Crow might need more than one coat to make him seem perfect, but that he would take time and do a good job. Then he said he had a smaller brush in the house, for fine work, and would get it right away.

Mr. Crow was already in hot weather costume and only had to lay off his vest for Jack Rabbit to begin, and pretty soon Mr. Rabbit came back with the fine brush and went to work. He told Mr. Crow to shut his eyes and keep them shut until the stuff was dry, as it might smart a little if it ran in them, and to stand in the sun, which Mr. Crow did. Jack Rabbit began at the top and whitewashed clear down to his feet, and then told him to turn around slowly, so the sun could get on all sides of him, and get him dry enough for a second coat.

So Mr. Crow turned around and around,

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

and kept his eyes shut, and got quite dizzy, before Mr. Rabbit told him he could open his eyes now and see how he liked his appearance as far as gone. And Mr. Crow looked and said he liked it very much, though he was pretty streaky in places. Mr. Rabbit said the next coat would surprise him, and told him to shut his eyes again, which Mr. Crow did, and Jack Rabbit gave him another and very heavy coat, from head to foot. Then when Mr. Crow had turned and turned in the sun to dry himself, he looked again and was quite pleased. He was almost entirely white, now, and Mr. Rabbit said one more coat would fix him.

So then Mr. Rabbit gave him the last coat and laid the whitewash on thicker than ever, especially in places, and when Mr. Crow could open his eyes he went in and looked at himself in Mr. Rabbit's long glass, and said he never thought anything so astonishing as that could happen to anybody, and declared he must hurry right off home now, and that he was going to make up a lot of



GAVE HIM ANOTHER AND VERY HEAVY COAT

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

whitewash and keep himself looking like that all the time, and his kitchen, too, and perhaps all the rest of the Hollow Tree, for there was certainly nothing in the world so wonderful as whitewash.

Then Mr. Crow thanked Mr. Rabbit and hurried off, but pretty soon walked slower, for, as he got dryer and dryer, the thick whitewash got stiffer and more caky, and Mr. Crow cracked a good deal as he walked, and he was afraid his nice new color might come off if he wasn't careful.

Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon were taking a nap in the sun when Mr. Crow got back to the Hollow Tree, and didn't hear him until he was standing right in front of them. Then they both woke up at once and took one look at the strange, white creature standing over them, almost blinding in the sun, and each one thought at first he was having a very wonderful dream, and couldn't speak for enjoying it. But when Mr. Crow started to come closer they were not so sure about the dream, and both gave a big jump



WOKE UP AND TOOK ONE LOOK AT THE
STRANGE, WHITE CREATURE

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

and made for the down-stairs door of the Hollow Tree, and got inside and bolted it tight.

That, of course, made Mr. Crow laugh, but not loud enough for them to hear him, and pretty soon he went to the door and tried the latch, and then knocked, and Mr. 'Possum called out:

“W-wh-who’s there?”

“Why, it’s me!” said Mr. Crow. “What have you got the door bolted for?”

And Mr. 'Coon called out, “Oh, Mr. Crow, did you see anything out there?”

“Why, no,” said Mr. Crow. “What made you think so.”

. And Mr. 'Possum said, “W-we saw something very strange out there, Mr. Crow—a v-very curious bird!”

“I guess you were dreaming,” said Mr. Crow. “There is no bird out here but me, that I know of. Open the door so I can come in and get the dinner.”

So then Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon pulled back the bolt and opened the door,

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

but when they saw Mr. Crow standing there, so white and shining, Mr. 'Possum fainted and Mr. 'Coon got behind a barrel until they heard Mr. Crow laugh and ask them if his new complexion had changed him so they didn't know him.

Then Mr. 'Possum came to, and Mr. 'Coon came out, and Mr. Crow told them all about how it happened, and they all went out in the sun again, and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum walked around Mr. Crow and admired him and talked about his great change, and Mr. 'Possum touched him and said his complexion seemed pretty solid, somewhat like a shell, and Mr. Crow told him how he had to move rather carefully in it, at first, though very likely it would limber up in time. Then he told them how he was going to do the kitchen that way, and perhaps other things, and they all got excited and talked about it, and Mr. 'Possum said that probably he would have them give him a coat next winter, to match the snow which would be handy, nights when he was bor-

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

rowing chickens from Mr. Man, though he supposed he would have to be dipped. Then they went in to dinner, and Mr. Crow set out such things as did not require much exercise, and by and by they all talked about it a great deal more and decided to have a regular cleaning up and whitewashing, like Mr. Rabbit's. Mr. 'Coon said he and Mr. 'Possum would do the cleaning up if Mr. Crow would attend to the whitewashing, as he had learned how, and they would all begin next day.

II

WHAT CAME OF MR. CROW'S GREAT EXPERIMENT

WELL, Mr. Crow slept sitting up in a chair that night, for fear of damaging his new complexion, and next morning was out very early with a basket, on the way to Mr. Man's lime-kiln in the edge of the Big West Hills.

It had rained a little in the night, and Mr. Crow was rather afraid he might get his new complexion wet on the bushes, so he stepped very carefully and was not really comfortable, though proud of his looks. He was gone a good while, but Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum were still asleep when he got back, so he emptied his lime into an old barrel behind

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

the stove where he intended to mix it by and by, and started the breakfast before calling them. They didn't get up right away, though, so Mr. Crow sat down and had a cup of coffee and a biscuit or two, and then called to them that he was going over to borrow Mr. Rabbit's whitewash brush. He might be a little while getting back, he said, but that they could start their job any time.

So then he left, and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum had their breakfast, and talked about what they would do, and decided that Mr. 'Coon could set things to rights in the house, and Mr. 'Possum could rake the leaves. After that they had some more coffee and talked some more, and Mr. 'Possum stretched and said he hadn't slept very well, and didn't know as he cared so much about cleaning up things this morning as he had yesterday, but he supposed they must be getting at it, as Mr. Crow seemed to have his mind set on changing things in general since Mr. Rabbit had got him started in the direction of whitewash, which

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

improved him, of course, in some ways; though it certainly made him less homelike and familiar and seemed to affect his cooking.

Then Mr. 'Possum yawned again and went down-stairs and got the rake, and went out and began to make a few little piles of leaves, which were quite wet from the rain, and did not rake very easy, and made him tired. So pretty soon he called up to Mr. 'Coon, who was sweeping and moving furniture, and asked him what he should do with the leaves, as they were too wet to burn, and if he left them there until they were dry the wind would blow them all about again.

Mr. 'Coon looked out the up-stairs window and told him he'd better fetch them up and put them in something in Mr. Crow's kitchen, so he could have them to light his fire with when they got dry. Then pretty soon he came down and helped Mr. 'Possum, and they carried them up, and saw Mr. Crow's barrel, and threw them in until it was quite full, then poked them down and

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

put in some more, and said how glad Mr. Crow would be to have them, and that now they would go outside and rest a little, until they saw him coming.

So they went out and sat on a log and smoked, and were wondering what kept Mr. Crow so long, when Mr. 'Possum said he smelled something curious, and just then Mr. 'Coon happened to look up at the window, and said:

“Goodness gracious alive, if the Hollow Tree isn't on fire!”

Then Mr. 'Possum looked up, too, and said, “As sure as you're born, and we shall lose everything!”

And just then they saw Mr. Crow coming, on the run, for he had seen it even before they had—Mr. Crow being always a great hand to see things.

“Hurry up, and get out our things,” he said; and didn't stop, but ran right to the door and up the stairs, with Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum after him, though there was a good deal of smelly smoke there, and they

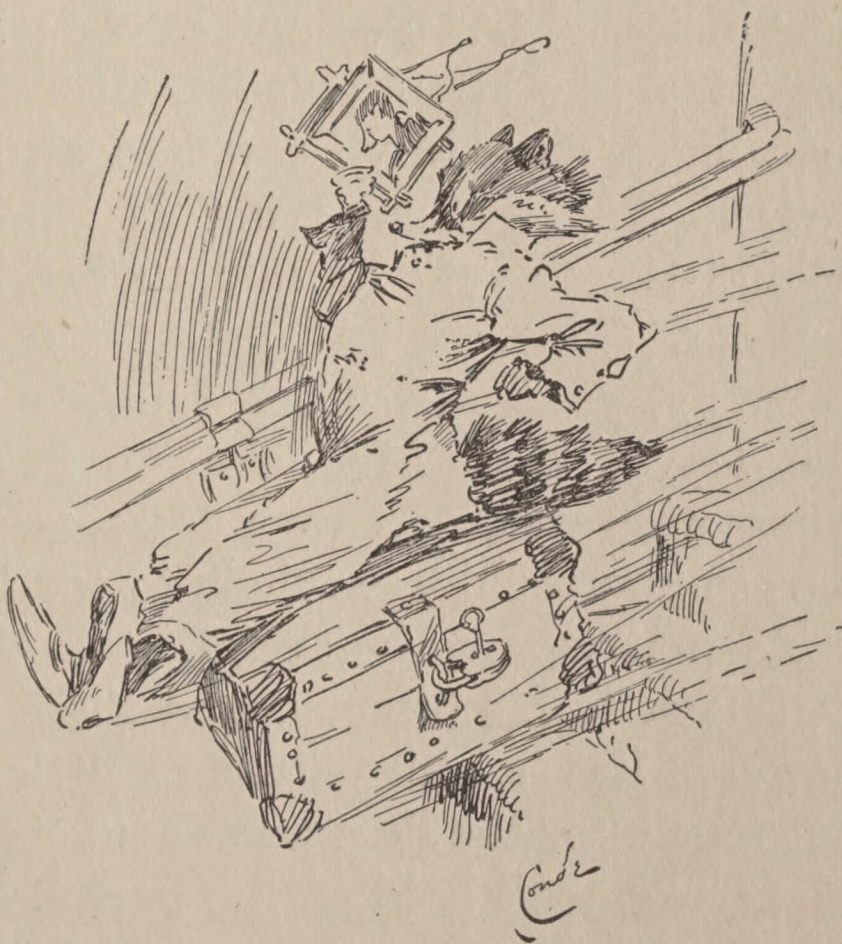


"GOOD GRACIOUS ALIVE! IF THE HOLLOW TREE
ISN'T ON FIRE!"

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

expected the flames to break out any minute. Mr. Crow said the fire seemed to be in the kitchen, and commenced to grab the parlor furniture and hand it to them, and Mr. 'Possum called to him to get his best suit out of his room, if possible, as he never expected to be able to afford another. Mr. 'Coon ran through to his room, and brought out some pictures he thought a good deal of, and came dragging his trunk with his free hand, and slipped when he got it to the stairs, and rode down on it like a sled, while everybody worked carrying and throwing things, and Mr. Crow forgot all about his fine new complexion, which began to crack off and scatter until it was all over the floor and stairs. Then pretty soon they all felt so choky from that queer smelly smoke that they went out in the air and piled up their things at a safe distance and stood, waiting for the flames to break out and burn down their big Hollow Tree they had lived in so long.

But for some reason the flames did not



MR. 'COON RODE DOWN ON IT LIKE A SLED

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

break out, and by and by the smoke seemed to get less. Then it really got a good deal less, until there wasn't any to speak of, and after a while the Hollow Tree people went to the down-stairs door and looked in, and, though there was plenty of smell, there was no smoke. Mr. 'Possum said it smelt a good deal like Mr. Man's lime-kiln on a wet morning. Then Mr. Crow had an idea.

"Did you put anything in that barrel behind the stove?" he said to Mr. 'Possum and Mr. 'Coon.

"Why, yes," Mr. 'Coon said, "we put in the leaves that Mr. 'Possum raked up. They were wet, and we put them there to dry, so you could have them to cook with."

Then Mr. Crow went straight up the stairs and back to his kitchen, and there was the barrel of leaves, still smoking a little, though not much, for the lime was about "slacked." Mr. Crow took hold of the barrel, and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. 'Possum, too, and they carried it down-stairs and outside, and when they got it far enough away from the tree

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

they emptied it out and kicked the leaves over the lime, which was still smoking a little and seemed very hot. Then Mr. Crow looked down at himself, and said:

“I don’t care much about whitewash, anyway.”

And Mr. ’Coon and Mr. ’Possum looked at him, too, which they had been too busy to do before, and Mr. ’Coon said:

“It doesn’t seem to last very well.”

And Mr. ’Possum said, “Mr. Crow, you have a new complexion every day.”

For the whitewash had come off of Mr. Crow in patches, until he looked like a black-and-white crazy quilt. And just then it began to rain again, and they all hurried to carry in their things; and when they got them all in the tree again Mr. ’Coon and Mr. ’Possum began to straighten them, but Mr. Crow said he thought he would go outside a little and enjoy the shower. Then pretty soon it poured pitchforks, but still Mr. Crow didn’t come in, and when Mr. ’Coon and Mr. ’Possum looked out of the

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upper window they saw him hopping about in it, and waving, and sometimes rolling in the leaves, and mopping his face as if he liked it better than anything; and by and by, when the rain was over and he came in, there was no more whitewash, and he was the blackest, shiniest Old Black Crow that ever was.

Then Mr. 'Coon said that, after all, there was nothing like a natural complexion.

And Mr. Crow said: "The trouble about whitewash is that it's too hard to keep it on."

Mr. 'Possum, who was resting in a big chair, after his hard morning's work, opened his eyes just long enough to say, "It's too hard to live up to"; and went sound asleep.

MR. 'COON'S STAR STORY

MR. 'COON'S STAR STORY

MR. 'COON EXPLAINS THE STARS AND HOW
THEY ARE MADE

ONE very pleasant June night the Hollow Tree people and Jack Rabbit walked over to the edge of the world and sat down to talk and smoke and look at the stars.

Mr. 'Possum said he always liked to look at the stars when he had anything on his mind, because they seemed so far away from all his troubles, and if he looked at them long enough his troubles seemed to get far away, too. He said he supposed the stars were fully two miles away, some of them, though the little ones would have to be closer or one would not be able to see them. Very likely the moon, being so big, might be farther away

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

than any, and if it was really another world, as Mr. Rabbit had once explained to them,¹ it must be still a good deal bigger than it looks, and very far away, indeed, probably as much as seven miles, though no one would think so to see it coming up full on a clear night behind the Blackberry-patch. Mr. 'Possum said that once, when he was quite young, he had tried to get over there to catch it, but had not been able to arrive in time.

Then all the Hollow Tree people and Jack Rabbit looked up at the sky—at the different kinds of stars, and the patterns they made, such as the Big Dipper, and the Seven Sisters, and at the Milky Way, that seemed broader and milkier than usual; and nobody said anything, until Mr. 'Coon happened to remark:

“I saw Mr. Man *making* the stars, once. It was very interesting, though dangerous; I nearly got hit by one.”

¹“On the Edge of the World,” in *The Hollow Tree and Deep Woods Book*.

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

Then Mr. Rabbit and the others were very much interested, and Mr. Rabbit said:

“What a curious idea! How is it you never told us about that before?”

“Well,” said Mr. 'Coon, “it was a good while ago, and the only people I told about it then didn't believe it. I haven't thought of it for a long time, and, besides, I supposed all smart people knew about Mr. Man having that job, and the careless way he works at it.”

“I wish you would tell us,” said Mr. Rabbit, “if you can remember clearly just what you think happened on the night you speak of.”

“I don't think anything about it,” said Mr. 'Coon. “It was a good while ago, but I remember exactly how it was as well as if it were only last week. I'm not likely ever to forget it. It was this way:

“We needed a chicken pretty badly in our family, and my big brother, who generally went after them, said it was about time I was learning to do something, and sent me over

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

to Mr. Man's to get it. I was very young, and nobody had ever told me the best way to go about borrowing a chicken from Mr. Man. Chickens used to roost in trees near Mr. Man's house in those days, and I knew my folks generally waited until he had gone to bed, which I supposed was only because they didn't like to disturb him. It is too bad that grown people do not explain things carefully to young folks—it would save many accidents.

“Well, I liked the idea of being sent for a chicken. It made me feel grown up. I didn't care to be out late, though, so I started quite early—about sunset—and walked along slowly, enjoying the evening, for it was summer-time, early in July—the Fourth—a date I am sure I shall never forget.

“It was a good ways from our place to Mr. Man's house, and it was about eight o'clock when I got there. Mr. Man and his folks had not gone to bed yet, but were out in the yard doing something, or getting ready to do something, and I was very much



"I WAS VERY YOUNG"

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

interested to know what it was. I really forgot all about the chicken I had come for, and went up quite near and sat in some young gooseberry-bushes to watch things.

“Mr. Man and Mrs. Man and their little boy all seemed to be very busy. They brought some chairs out in the yard, and a table with a pitcher and some glasses—in case they were thirsty, Mrs. Man said, it being so warm—and then Mr. Man brought out a box of things, and Mrs. Man told him to set it some distance off, to avoid accidents, so he set it just over by the gooseberry-bushes, quite close to me. I didn’t know what Mrs. Man meant then by avoiding accidents, but I did later.

“I wanted ever so much to see what was in that box, and decided that presently, when they got interested in something else, I would step out and take a look at it. But they seemed to be interested in the *box* most of the time, and Mr. Man’s little boy kept asking every minute if it wasn’t dark enough now, and by and by Mr. Man said he

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

thought it was, and came over to the box and took out something and carried it over where the others were, and seemed to be striking a match, and then, all at once, there was a great swishing sound, and a long tail of fire that went climbing to the sky, and when it got there suddenly seemed to blow up and send out six or seven of the most beautiful stars, while Mr. Man's little boy jumped about and shouted, 'Hurrah for the Fourth of July!' Being pretty badly scared, I didn't see just what became of those stars, but I suppose some of them are among those we see up there now, though perhaps some of them didn't stick, but turned into falling stars, then, or later on.

"Well, Mr. Man and his little boy kept right at work making the stars, as hard as they could, and I had a very good time, while it lasted. I came out of the gooseberry-bushes where I could see well, and every time they sent up a batch of stars on that tail of fire and Mr. Man's boy shouted and danced, I danced about, too, and felt like shouting for

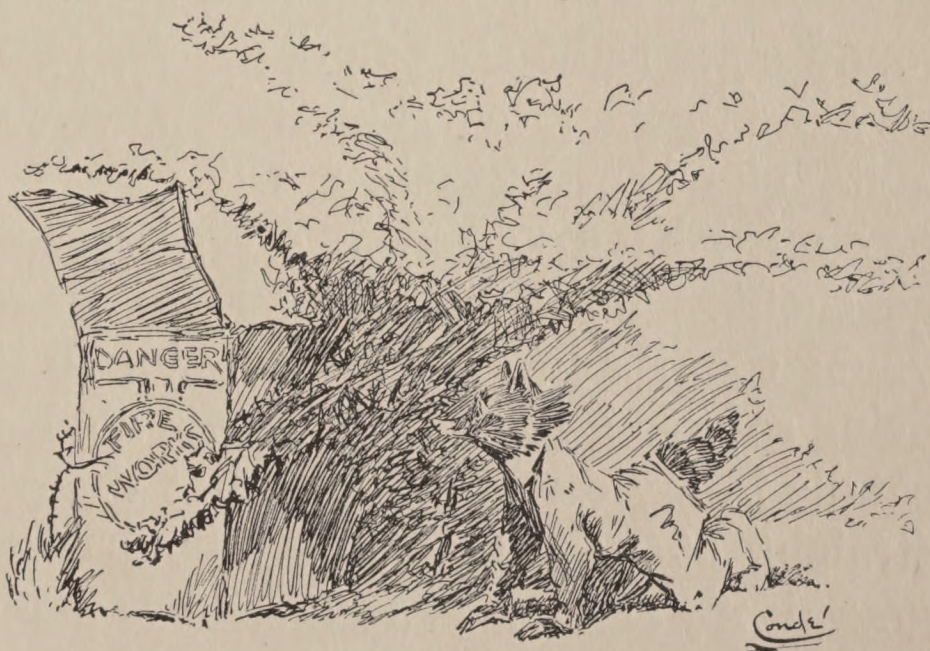
MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

the Fourth of July, which I decided must be star-making day every year.

“But most of all I was anxious to see in that box. It seemed quite dark inside, and I couldn’t understand where all the fire that they made the stars out of could come from, and I don’t understand that part of it yet. I only know what happened next, which was this:

“Mr. Man and his little boy seemed to get through with the first part of the star-making performance, for I heard Mr. Man say ‘That’s all of those. Now we’ll have the Roman candles,’ which I judged must be some different stars, perhaps little ones, because Mr. Man’s boy said, ‘Oh, I can do those—I can do the Roman candles.’ Then Mr. Man came over and got something out of the box again, and I couldn’t stand it any longer, I was so curious; so when he had gone back I slipped over and peeked in.

“It was light enough for my eyes, and I could make out a number of curious-shaped little packages still in the box—some round



"BUT MOST OF ALL I WAS ANXIOUS TO SEE IN THAT
BOX "

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

and long, some round and short, and some flat like wheels or six-cornered, and some coiled around and around like little snails, and nothing among them like anything I had ever seen before. I couldn't imagine how those things could make stars, and was just about to take out one and examine it when there was a bright light and the Roman candles began to work and send up beautiful round stars right above our heads, first one way and then another, lighting up everything quite plainly. Just then Mr. Man's little boy must have looked in my direction, for he shouted right out, 'Oh, look! there's a young coon!' and, without stopping to think, being so young himself, he aimed his Roman candle in my direction, and shot those stars straight at me. One big yellow one just grazed my left ear and scared me so I couldn't move at first. Then a big red one singed my back fur, and I commenced to dodge and get in motion. And just then a big blue star-ball came straight toward me. I thought I was gone then, but I wasn't.



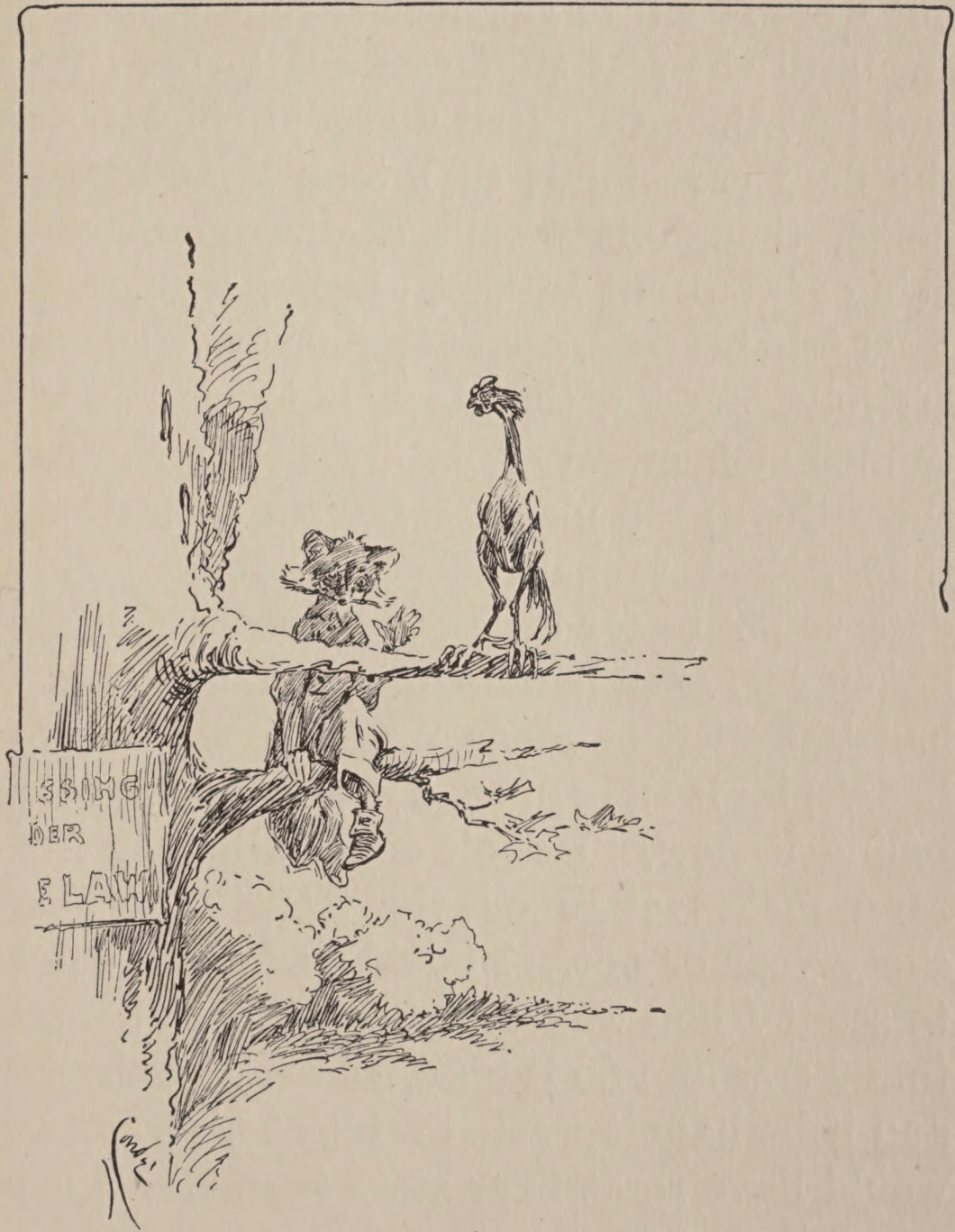
“A BIG YELLOW ONE JUST GRAZED MY LEFT EAR”

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

It didn't hit me; it fell short and went in the box.

“Well, there must have been ever so many of the best stars wasted that night. Before I could get fairly turned around those curious things I had seen in there began to go off. You never heard such a popping and fizzing and spluttering and banging, and you never could imagine such a flashing and flaming and wriggling of dangerous materials as that blue star-ball started.

“Of course I didn't stay right there to enjoy it. About the first pop that came from that star-box I was headed in the other direction and up a tree, where I could get a good view and be out of range. It was most exciting. Every minute something new came out of that box—fiery snake things, and whirlers, and all sorts of fancy stuff, and things like bouquets of flowers, which I suppose would have been up there in the sky now for us to look at, if they had'nt been wasted so recklessly; and Mr. Man and his family all came running with pails of water,



"I NOTICED A SCARED CHICKEN"

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

but were afraid to get near enough to put it on, until the star-stuff was nearly used up; and just then I noticed a scared chicken on the limb next mine, so I took it and went home, though it wasn't a very good one, being picked out in that careless way.

"I told my folks about seeing Mr. Man and *his* folks making the stars, but they didn't think much of my story. When I showed them the singed place on my back they said that I had probably been shot at, as I deserved to be for trying to borrow a chicken before Mr. Man had gone to bed, and that I had imagined or made up the rest. But I hadn't, for it all happened just as I have been telling it now. I don't know whether Mr. Man makes stars on the Fourth of July every year or not. I could have gone back to see if I had wanted to, but I didn't want to. I saw him do it once, which was plenty; and if he hadn't wasted a lot of his stuff we would have some finer stars than any I can see up there now."

Mr. Rabbit smoked thoughtfully a minute.

MR. CROW AND THE WHITEWASH

Then he said: "That is certainly a very remarkable story, but I can't believe that those were real stars that Mr. Man and his family were making. I think those must all have been just shooting stars, and meteors, and comets and such things, that are always flying about and changing. There is a story in my family that accounts for the other stars, and seems more probable, because it happened a very long time ago, when 'most anything could be true and when all the first things began."

"Very likely," said the 'Coon, "but what I saw was plenty true enough to suit me, while it lasted."

MR. RABBIT'S STAR STORY

MR. RABBIT'S STAR STORY

JACK RABBIT TELLS OF HIS GRANDPAW'S
LONG LADDER THAT TOUCHED THE SKY

THIS is the story that Jack Rabbit told to the Hollow Tree people when they sat together on the edge of the world, and hung their feet over the Big Nowhere and looked at the stars.

"Well," he said, "you may remember my telling you once about the moon being a world, and how, a long time ago, my folks used to live there, and all slid off one day, when the moon tipped up on its edge, and they were not holding on."

Mr. 'Possum said that he remembered quite well, and that Mr. Rabbit's story had seemed to explain everything—at the time.

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Of course, he said, an explanation couldn't be expected to last forever, and if Mr. Rabbit would like to make a new one that would be even better, they would be glad to hear it, because Mr. Rabbit's stories were always interesting, even when doubtful, and besides—

Mr. Rabbit didn't wait for Mr. 'Possum to get done. He said it was one of those conversations that could be finished any time and didn't need any audience. Perhaps Mr. 'Possum wouldn't mind waiting, he said, until the others had told their stories and gone home. Then he went right on to tell *his* story, like this:

“The sky is also a world—as big a world as this is, with a wide, rounding floor that looks blue in the daytime and nearly black at night, when the sun is gone. The sky country is really kind of an up-stairs world, and the stars are small windows, or peep-holes, in the big, blue floor, for the people up there to look down through when they want to see what is going on below. Those

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little windows are always there, day and night, though you can't see them in the daytime, because then the sun is shining here and not up there. In the evening, when it quits shining here, it goes up there, and then, of course, all the star windows are lit up, just like a window in the Hollow Tree at night. I will tell you a story of the sky country and its star windows, which explains everything. It has come down in our family ever since my folks lived in the moon, which was a great many great-grandfathers back, and is true, accordingly.

"The moon, where we used to live, is a pretty small world, compared with the sky world—being about like a pea compared with a bread-bowl—and our people used to have such big families that if they hadn't found some place for them to go they would have got so thick that the moon wouldn't have begun to hold them.

"Well, the moon is pretty close to the sky—not as close as you would think to look at it, for it seems right against it; it is

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really about a mile off—a mile and ten feet, exactly, I believe, or at least that was the length of my eighty-second great-grandfather's ladder, though, of course, that had to slant some. My grandparent built that ladder when our folks got together and decided that we were getting too thick and something must be done about it. My ancestor said the sky was just the thing. He had never been there, but he had a beautiful imagination, and he told them all about the lovely rivers and meadows and fields of clover they would find there, and said he would invent a way to get there for all who wanted to go.

“Everybody that heard my ancestor went home and told what a grand place the sky was, and made it even better than he had said; and some went around getting other crowds together and telling them about it, and went on improving the scenery until nobody had ever dreamed before of such a wonderful place as that sky-country, and it looked as if all the people in the moon were



"TOLD WHAT A GRAND PLACE THE SKY WAS"

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just waiting to climb Grandpaw's ladder as soon as it was done.

"It took my ancestor a good while to make it. The first time he got it done it was too short. When he sent out bids to the raising, and a lot of the neighbors came over to help, and ever so many folks were there with their things, ready to go up, they found it wouldn't touch by a good deal, and Grandpaw had to splice on about a quarter of a mile more. Then they had another raising, and when they got the ladder up and well propped, Grandpaw went up first to saw out a door to get in by.

"Now Grandpaw was smart. He knew that there are a lot of people never satisfied with anything, and who always want to come back, no matter how fine the place is. So he sawed out a little double trap, opening in the center, just big enough for single file, and put on strong spring hinges that open only one way—the way in, of course—with no handholds on the above side. Then he took a little look inside himself, and came

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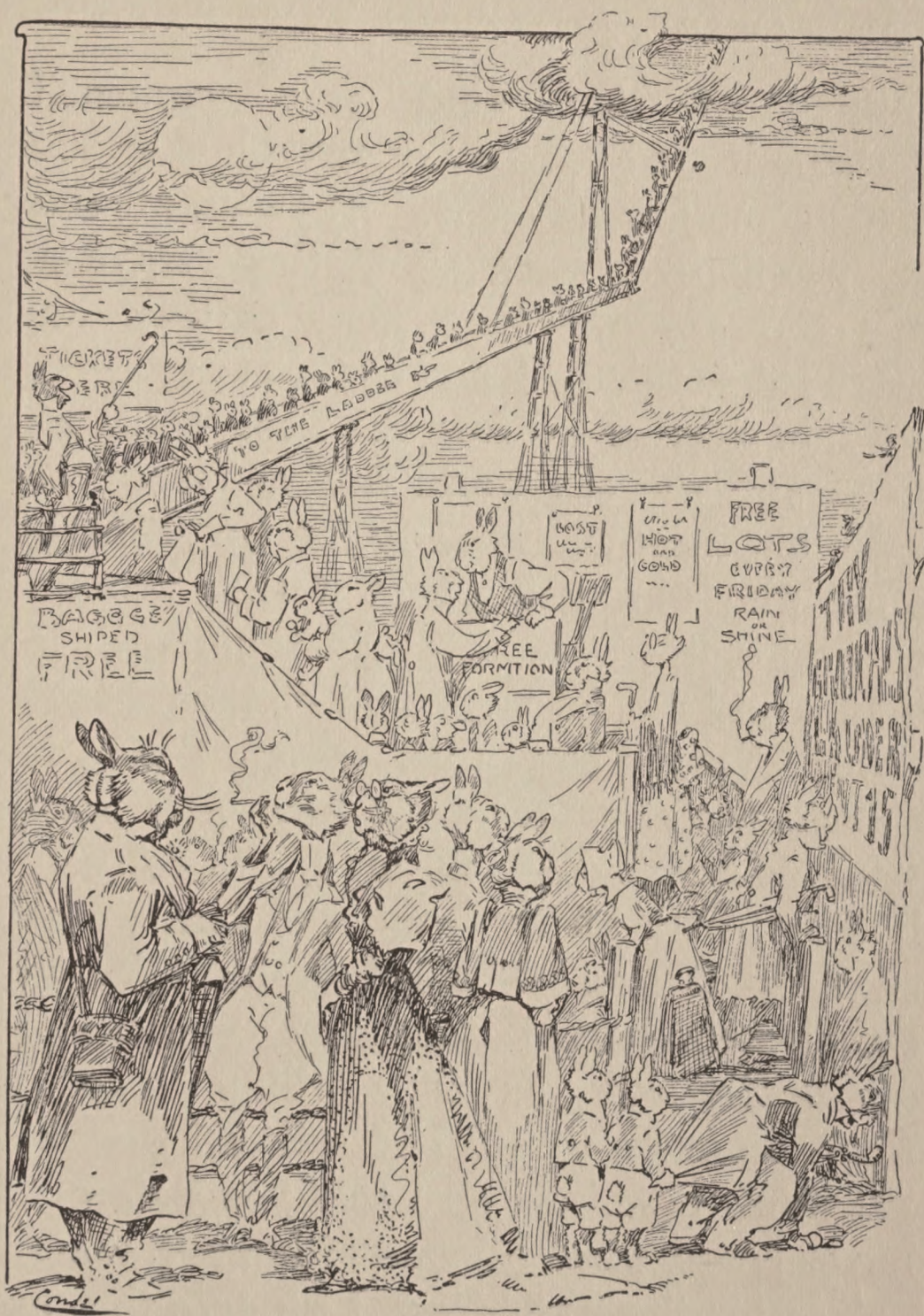
back down the ladder, and the procession started.

“No such a collection of our family was ever seen before or since. Everybody in the moon had heard about that wonderful new country where there was lots of room and everything free, and they wanted to see it. They piled up that ladder in a steady stream for nearly a month before the line began to thin out, and it was a great help to the space on the moon. Of course none of them could come back to tell how it was there, or draw back once he got started through Grandpaw’s spring-closing, one-way door. One long, thin rabbit called Snoop, who was always trying to see everything in advance, tried to jerk back after he got his head through, but Grandpaw’s door caught him just back of the ears, and he decided to go on in. I don’t know what my eighty-second great-grandfather saw when he took that first look. He didn’t say. Grandpaw didn’t join the sky procession himself, because he said he had to keep his ladder in repair. I

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forgot to say that he charged for each one that went up, and prospered a good deal, at first. When the crowd thinned out he sent several different ones around to explain what a grand place the sky was, and all about his ladder. My ancestor was a great hand to keep things moving.

“Well, by and by our folks who had stayed on the moon began to notice bright lights in the sky at night, and wondered what they were, and one night when business wasn’t very good Grandpaw went about two-thirds of the way up his ladder to see. When he came back he said that those were windows of various sizes which the sky settlers were cutting through the floor so they could see what was going on back home. At first there were only a few scattering holes, but every night there were a lot more, until it looked as if those people up there put in all their time looking down at the place where they came from. Our folks used to listen to see if they wouldn’t call down something about how they liked it, but



"THEY PILED UP THAT LADDER IN A STEADY
STREAM"

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nothing of that kind ever happened. Perhaps it was too far, or maybe they had made some law about it. Anyway, all that my people ever knew about those travelers was the windows they kept cutting, and those got so thick, by and by, that my ancestor was worried for fear the floor would get weak and the sky-world fall to pieces and spoil his income. So he sent up word by some who were going that if that window-cutting didn't stop he would take down his ladder and not let any more of their friends come. Very likely that scared them, for though the sky-floor must have got pretty weak, it didn't come through, and you see it is there, with all the windows, that we call stars, in it yet. The ladder built by my eighty-second great-grandfather remained in our family and was still working up to the time the moon tipped and spilt all that was left down here, just as I told you before. I never heard what became of it after that.

“As for those windows, I suppose they are still in use, as those sky-people would want



“GRANDPAW WENT ABOUT TWO-THIRDS OF THE
WAY UP HIS LADDER, TO SEE”

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to see what became of us. Those holes look pretty small, of course, from here, being so far away, and people got to calling them stars because they look like stars at this distance, though most of them would be round or square, I judge, if you could see them close. Some of them must have shutters, for sometimes there seem to be a great many more than others, especially on a very clear night, when I suppose those people up there have them all open. They are so thick then that I don't wonder my ancestor grew worried about the floor. I found a leaf, once, from one of Mr. Man's poetry books, and it said on it:

The night has a thousand eyes,

and I suppose that meant the stars, but it must have been written a long time ago, for there are a good many more than a thousand now; and there's a verse in our family which says:

A million windows in the sky
Watch the nights and days go by.

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Which proves they have been there a long time and that they are really windows, and useful, and not mere ornaments, though they are certainly very pretty to look at, especially on a night like this and in such good company."

Then Mr. 'Possum said that he thought Mr. Rabbit's story was a very good one and explained the stars fully as well, in some ways, as Mr. 'Coon's story, though it was less exciting. He said he was sorry there was no story in his family to tell what the stars were, and asked Mr. Crow if there was anything of the kind in his family.

Mr. Crow said that there was a story, but that it wasn't exactly in his *family*—it was in *him*. Both Mr. 'Coon's and Mr. Rabbit's stories had been very good, he said, and no doubt true enough as far as they went, but that his story went farther, a good deal farther, especially in the direction of personal experience, even than Mr. 'Coon's. It had all been quite sad at the time, and he had never told it before to any one, but

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if they cared to hear it he would tell it now.

Then the 'Coon and the 'Possum and Mr. Jack Rabbit said they would be glad to hear a story from Mr. Crow, especially to-night; and Mr. Crow said he must think a little to get the beginning straight, which he did, and was ready presently to start.

MR. CROW'S STAR STORY

MR. CROW'S STAR STORY

MR. CROW GIVES HIS ACCOUNT OF HOW THE
STARS WERE MADE

THIS is the story that Mr. Crow told on the night that he and Mr. 'Coon and Jack Rabbit and Mr. 'Possum sat on the edge of the world and hung their feet over the Big Nowhere and looked at the stars.

"Well," said Mr. Crow, "I can tell you something about the stars that may surprise you. I made the stars myself—not all of them, of course, but a good many of them. No doubt a number of them were made in the way Jack Rabbit has explained, and others in the way that Mr. 'Coon saw himself, and told us about, but most of the bright stars, and where there are a number

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together, I can account for, because I made them myself, as I said—though I did not enjoy it. They came out of my head—that is, they were knocked out—not all at once, but at different times. I did not make them alone—I had help—my wife helped me; also my mother-in-law, who was visiting us. It was this way:

“I was quite young when I married and I did not pick out the right person for a peaceful home. Minerva, which was her name, had never been brought up to do anything but go about with her mother and get up meetings on one thing and another and talk to them as long as they would stand it, and then go home and talk to Minerva’s father, who was not very strong, and passed away at one such time. It was my turn after that. I came along just in time to take his place.

“It was nice enough at first. I thought how smart Mother Crow and Minerva were, and was proud when I saw them get up those big meetings. You never saw such meetings



"I ASKED MINERVA TO TELL ME IN A FEW SIMPLE
WORDS WHAT SHE HAD BEEN TALKING
ABOUT AT THE MEETING"

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as those were. I've seen the trees in every direction black with our family, listening to Minerva and her mother talk. I don't know what they said—I never could seem to get the run of it, and, besides, I had to slip home early and get the supper, so I never got to hear their closing remarks, which might have explained things. Once when I asked Minerva to tell me in a few simple words what she had been talking about at the meeting, it seemed to fret her, and she said I seemed to understand private cooking better than public questions, and had better stick to it; which I did, after that, and I didn't go to the meetings at all. Minerva was not a cook herself, though her mother had been before she took to society work, and she told me some very good recipes.

“It was trying to learn those recipes that started my work in the star-making line. She gave me a recipe for chicken-pie one morning before she and Minerva started out, and the last thing she said, just before she



"SHE JUST WHEELED AND GAVE ME A CLIP"

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left, was that it was only to have one crust. I had never made a pie that way. I always used two crusts—one above and one below, so when it came to that part this time, I put a lower crust in the pan, and then the chicken, and baked it just so, though I thought it would look much better with a top crust. When Mrs. Crow and Minerva came home, they were cross, and fussing a good deal at each other, because, for some reason, the meeting hadn't gone well, and when they came in and Mother Crow saw the open pie on the table, she asked me what I meant by making such a looking thing as that. I told her I had put on only one crust, according to her orders, and I thought, myself, a top crust would make it look better.

“Well, she didn't say another word. She just wheeled and gave me a clip on the left ear, and right then I saw three stars, just as plain as anything, fly out of my head and start for the sky. I don't know which ones they are, but they would be as big as any up

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there. When I got my balance I said that I could see that a pie made in that way was a mistake, though it would improve the looks of the sky; and Minerva and her mother both said I had gone crazy, and I had to dodge in two directions to keep from adding several more stars that same evening.

“I made plenty of them after that. They kept me busy at it. Something had gone wrong with their meetings, and they took it out on me. From what they said to each other I judged that some other ladies were holding still bigger meetings; also that those ladies were a disgrace, and that something ought to be done to them. Then all the things they thought about doing to those rival creatures they did to me, and I was in the star business most of the time. I made big ones and I made little ones, according to how mad my folks were and the aim they took. Also groups of stars: Once Minerva cracked me with the soup-ladle, and I made the dipper. I knew they were real

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stars, because every clear night when I went out for a little peace I could see new ones, and I could recognize which were mine.

“I don’t know how many stars I made, nor what they all were now, but if I had kept on the sky would be running over by this time. I suppose I should have gone on, too, if something hadn’t happened to Minerva. One day she went with her mother to attend one of those meetings which those creatures were holding over in the Burnt Deadening where there was a lot of bare, dead trees, and Minerva and Mother Crow tried to break it up.

“I didn’t recognize my mother-in-law when she came home. She could only see a little out of one eye and there wasn’t a whole feather on her. Minerva didn’t come at all. Her funeral was next day, and then, of course, I was a widower, though not yet entirely out of the star business.

“Mrs. Crow gave up public life and started a boarding-house, as you may still remember, and I was with her a good while,



"I DIDN'T RECOGNIZE MY MOTHER-IN-LAW"

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and almost every day added a few stars to the firmament, as Mr. Dog calls it. Once she flung the milk-pitcher at my head, and when it hit and broke, it seemed to add some to the Milky Way. Several of those fancy designs up there I can remember making. They are all pretty enough to look at now, but I did not enjoy them much when I first saw them. I don't care to make any more, and, besides, there are plenty already. Sometimes I seem to see a few new ones up there, and it makes me think that somebody else has gone into the business of making them, the same way I did. I hope not, for though it may be the best and quickest way, it is not the one I should ever pick for myself again."

Mr. Crow sighed and lit his pipe, and everybody looked up at the twinkling sky. And Mr. 'Possum said he could understand now why there were several different kinds of stars. They had been made in different ways. Mr. 'Coon had seen Mr. Man working at one or two kinds; Mr. Rabbit's



EVERYBODY LOOKED UP AT THE TWINKLING SKY

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people had made another kind; and Mr. Crow had, perhaps, made several kinds. He said he had never heard anything so interesting in his life, or so reasonable.

A DEEP WOODS WAR

A DEEP WOODS WAR

MR. 'COON TELLS A CURIOUS STORY OF LOVE
AND BATTLE

ONCE upon a time Mr. Dog came over to the Hollow Tree to spend the evening with the 'Coon and 'Possum and the Old Black Crow, and pretty soon other Deep Woods people dropped in, and everybody was passing the time of day and feeling comfortable and happy in the good society of those present. They talked about the weather, and how it seemed to be a dry spring, and Mr. Rabbit said his garden was suffering, and Mr. Turtle said he had never seen the Wide Blue Water so low at this season for a hundred and nine or ten years. He couldn't remember just which it was,

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but it was the year that Father Storm Turtle, who lives up in the Big West Hills, and makes the thunder, was laid up with misery in his shoulder, and Mother Storm had to run the thunder-works and tend to sick folks, too. Most people, Mr. Turtle said, believed that good, loud thunder helps to shake the rain out of the clouds, and very likely it was so, for the next spring, when Father Storm got well, he gave them enough of it, and it rained so that the Wide Blue Water came up into the Big Deep Woods as far as the Hollow Tree, which wasn't a Hollow Tree then, but a good, sound oak only about four hundred years old—his uncle Tom Turtle, who lived up by the Forks, having been just about that old himself when it came up as a sapling.¹

When Mr. Turtle got through, none of the Hollow Tree people said anything at all, at first, for whenever Mr. Turtle mentioned how old he was, and the great ages of many of his family, it seemed to them too wonderful

¹ "Mr. Turtle's Thunder Story" in *The Hollow Tree and Deep Woods Book*.

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for words. But by and by Mr. Dog said that Mr. Turtle was very likely right about the thunder making the rain, for he had heard Mr. Man explain that the reason it was so dry this year was because there was a great war going on, on the other side of the world, with big guns roaring all day and night, and that the terrible jar and noise of those guns kept it raining there steadily, so there was no rain left for this side. Mr. Dog supposed that Father Storm Turtle could not get up a noise big enough to beat that war noise, and had about given up trying.

Then Mr. Rabbit asked why Mr. Man's people wanted to have war and fire those big guns at each other, which must be very dangerous and very apt to kill people, besides causing floods in one place and drought in another, which was bad for everybody concerned.

Mr. Dog said Mr. Man himself didn't know why all those Mr. Mans over there wanted to have a war. Mr. Dog had heard Mr. Man say that those people over there

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didn't know themselves what it was all about, and that they were killing each other every day by the thousand with those big guns, and losing all their property, for no reason at all that anybody could think of, except, perhaps, to take each other's country, which probably wouldn't be worth much now, whoever got it. Mr. Dog said that, of course, Mr. Man's people were very smart in many ways, but that as nearly as he could find out they had always been very silly about wars, and had fought many of them, for no good reason, instead of being wise like the Deep Woods people, who only fight to get something to eat, or sometimes when there are rivals at a time of courtship. Mr. Dog said his own people were more like Mr. Man's, probably from association, and that more than once at Great Corners he had been set upon by a perfectly strange Mr. Dog, without cause; but even then it was generally a single-handed affair and soon over, except once, when he believed every Mr. Dog in Great Corners took a hand for a few minutes,

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though nobody was hurt and everybody seemed to feel better for the exercise.

Mr. Dog went on to say that he seldom enjoyed these occasions, and lately had stayed in Mr. Man's car while they were at Great Corners and talked earnestly to any strange dog that came around looking for war.

Then Mr. 'Coon, who hadn't said a word so far, but had just been smoking and thinking, seemed to wake up out of deep reflection, and said:

"I know something about war. I thought of making one, once, and afterwards I saw one."

Then everybody looked at Mr. 'Coon, who is usually rather quiet, and asked him to please tell about those wars—nothing could be more interesting, just now, than to hear about them.

So Mr. 'Coon filled his pipe up fresh, and told them.

"Well," he said, "there isn't much to tell about the first one. I was quite young, and there was a family lived not far from us who

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had a young Miss 'Coon that I thought I would like to set up housekeeping with, and when I mentioned it she was a good deal in the notion, too. Everything seemed to be going along quite well until, one day, another young Mr. 'Coon came along and saw Violet—that was her name—and he had the same plan that I had. He belonged to that family over near the Jagged Bluffs—a common, oversized lot, with no style to speak of. I had never seen him, myself, when I first heard about his coming to call on her, and made up my mind I would fight him the first time we met. Then I thought I had better get a look at him and study his weak points, without him seeing me; so I hid in the bushes one afternoon, near Violet's house, to watch him pass. When, pretty soon, he came along and I saw the curious shape and size of him, I decided that Violet was not worthy of me. He was very wide forward, and his hind legs were set in a peculiar way. I can't imagine what Violet could see in him."



“I CAN’T IMAGINE WHAT VIOLET COULD SEE IN
HIM ”

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Mr. 'Coon sighed and took time to fill his pipe before he went on.

“That was the war I thought of making,” he went on, after a minute or two, “and that was all there was of it. I took a walk over to see a good friend of mine, in those days, a young Mr. Bear named Redfield, generally called Cousin Redfield, or Reddie. Mr. Crow once told us about some of his little-boy adventures, as you may remember. Well, I found Cousin Redfield and told him what had happened, and he said he would go with me and help me fight that spread-shouldered ruffian, and asked me what were his weak points. I said I hadn't noticed any, and we decided that we wouldn't bother with him, and went to visit a honey-tree that Cousin Redfield had found and thought of robbing, some night. I said I didn't think it was right to rob the bees of their honey, but that we would go and look at it, to take my mind from less pleasant things.

“So we walked a good ways until we came to it, and it was there that I saw the other

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war that I mentioned. It seems there were several swarms of bees in that tree, it being quite a big one with a number of hollow limbs. Every year when the young bees had made new swarms they had moved into vacant limbs, until, I suppose, the tree had become quite full and pretty crowded. I don't know what had started the trouble, but there was a good deal of it going on when we got there. Perhaps some strong new or old swarm was trying to drive out a weak one and take its place. Anyway, there were about a million of those bees buzzing and whirling about outside, and you could smell that they were mad, and you could see that they were fighting, for there were dead ones on the ground, and they were pattering down on the leaves quite fast. Cousin Redfield and I first thought it was sprinkling, until we saw that the falling drops were dead bees.

“But that was nothing to what happened a few minutes later. For all those other swarms, one after another, pretty soon began

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to pour out from the different holes in the limbs and body of the tree, and join in the war, until the air around that tree was just black with fighting bees, and the dead ones were coming down so thick that I would not have cared to stand under it without Mr. Man's umbrella.

"Cousin Redfield and I got off a little ways to watch it. Cousin Redfield said that perhaps we ought to interfere, but I said that it wasn't our war, and that it would be better to wait and see what we could do when it was over.

"So we got in a good safe place and looked on, and I never thought anything could be like it. I don't know how those bees could decide which side they were on, or what they were fighting about, or which side was which. They must have been all relatives once, and would be all cousins, or something, now. They all looked exactly alike to Cousin Redfield and me, and pretty soon they got very thick on the ground, like a kind of black moss or something, that was spreading

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and piling up deeper every minute and doing nobody any good, and not deciding anything, that we could see. Cousin Redfield and I made up our minds that they had all gone crazy.

“I don’t know how many millions of those bees there were, but they made a noise like Mr. Man’s automobile when it is running at high speed, and that mad-bee smell was so strong that it seemed to Cousin Redfield and me almost dangerous to stay there. So we got a little farther away, for we didn’t know but that all those bees might suddenly decide to quit fighting one another and make a rush at us. But that didn’t happen. They were too busy with their war. They kept on pouring out of the tree until there were no more left to come, and that black cloud whizzed and stung and smelled, and the black moss on the ground kept growing and spreading until we could see that the live ones were thinning out. By and by there were more bees on the ground than there were in the air, and we thought they would

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quit then and go to work, but they kept right on until they were more than shoe-top deep on the ground and just about ordinarily thick in the air, and still fighting.

“I don’t know how long it was that Cousin Redfield and I stood there watching those bees kill one another, but I know by sunset there were not more than a dozen or two left, and they were roosting about on the limbs and leaves, worn out or crippled, and not able to fight any more.

“Then Cousin Redfield said he thought it was time for us to interfere and see what could be done, so we each broke off a little birch brush and swept a path through that black bee moss, and looked into the hole at the bottom of the tree, but couldn’t hear anything. So we climbed up a little ways and pretty soon came to honey—bushels of it. There were no bees there except a few fat, lazy ones that couldn’t sting, and were probably kings or queens or something, and we didn’t mind them. We ate all the honey we could, and went home, and next morning



“ALL DAY LONG CARRIED HONEY OUT OF THE BEE-
TREE”

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got baskets and all day long carried honey out of the bee-tree and had enough to last our families for a whole year, the best honey I ever saw in the Big Deep Woods, and the *most* I ever expect to see.

“We didn’t get it quite all, though, for the second morning when we came back we found the tree occupied. Violet and that big, rough creature from the Jagged Bluffs had found it, and started housekeeping there, with enough honey to last them at least a month. I heard later they called it their honeymoon, and I believe people sometimes call the first few weeks of being married by that name still.

“Cousin Redfield said he would help me drive them out, if I said so; but I said no, that place had seen war enough, and with all the honey we had at home I could get along without the present contents of the tree, so we went away. I said that something would probably happen to those two for the way they had done, and I was right. For about six weeks later the honey smell of that



“VIOLET AND THAT BIG CREATURE HAD STARTED
HOUSEKEEPING”

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tree brought another big, new, strong swarm of bees to settle there, and they turned Violet and her thick-necked partner out, in about two minutes, and took full possession. Cousin Redfield Bear and I used to walk over that way every day, to observe things, and we happened along just as it was going on. That fellow's wide build didn't help him any against bees. Violet came out first, pawing her nose with one hand and knocking bees with the other. He stayed to fight a little, but directly he rolled out, scratching and pawing, and five minutes later his own mother wouldn't have known him, he was so swelled. Violet looked at him, and then at me and Cousin Redfield laughing at him, and I think would have deserted him for me, then; but Violet herself had one eye closed, and her nose was the shape and size of a reversed turnip. I saw then that I had never truly loved her and had been wise to give her up. They left the country soon afterwards and I don't know what became of them. That honey-tree blew down one winter night

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about a year after, and then Cousin Redfield and I went back and got some more honey, but not as much as we did after the great war."

The Hollow Tree people hadn't said a word during Mr. 'Coon's story, but when he had finished Mr. Dog said so far as he could see there was just about as much sense in that war as there was in the one going on over on the other side of the world, and that the war over there would very likely end in about the same way.

But Mr. 'Possum said that Mr. 'Coon's war was a good deal better than Mr. Man's, because, being so soon over, nothing but those silly fighting bees was wasted; and for Mr. 'Coon and Cousin Redfield Bear to have stayed out of it until there was no more fighting, and then go in and carry off a wagon-load of honey, was probably the smartest thing they had ever done in their lives.

MR. 'POSSUM'S SICK SPELL

MR. 'POSSUM'S SICK SPELL

MR. 'POSSUM HAS A NIGHT ADVENTURE WHICH
CAUSES EXCITEMENT

ONCE upon a time, said the Story Teller, something very sad nearly happened in the Hollow Tree. It was Mr. 'Possum's turn, one night, to go out and borrow a chicken from Mr. Man's roost, and coming home he fell into an old well and lost his chicken. He nearly lost himself, too, for the water was icy cold and Mr. 'Possum thought he would freeze to death before he could climb out, because the rocks were slippery and he fell back several times.

As it was, he got home almost dead, and next morning was sicker than he had ever been before in his life. He had pains in

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his chest and other places, and was all stuffed up in his throat and very scared. The 'Coon and the Crow who lived in the Hollow Tree with him were scared, too. They put him to bed in the big room downstairs, and said they thought they ought to send for somebody, and Mr. Crow said that Mr. Owl was a good hand with sick folks, because he looked so wise and didn't say much, which always made the patient think he knew something.

So Mr. Crow hurried over and brought Mr. Owl, who put on his glasses and looked at Mr. 'Possum's tongue, and felt of his pulse, and listened to his breathing, and said that the cold water seemed to have struck in and that the only thing to do was for Mr. 'Possum to stay in bed and drink hot herb tea and not eat anything, which was a very sad prescription for Mr. 'Possum, because he hated herb tea and was very partial to eating. He groaned when he heard it and said he didn't suppose he'd ever live to enjoy himself again, and that he



MR. OWL LOOKED AT HIS TONGUE AND FELT HIS
PULSE

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might just as well have stayed in the well with the chicken, which was a great loss and doing no good to anybody. Then Mr. Owl went away, and told the Crow outside that Mr. 'Possum was a very sick man, and that at his time of life and in his state of flesh his trouble might go hard with him.

So Mr. Crow went back into the kitchen and made up a lot of herb tea and kept it hot on the stove, and Mr. 'Coon sat by Mr. 'Possum's bed and made him drink it almost constantly, which Mr. 'Possum said might cure him if he didn't die of it before the curing commenced.

He said if he just had that chicken, made up with a good platter of dumplings, he believed it would do him more good than anything, and he begged the 'Coon to go and fish it out, or to catch another one, and try it on him, and then if he did die he would at least have fewer regrets.

But the Crow and the 'Coon said they must do as Mr. Owl ordered, unless Mr. 'Possum wanted to change doctors, which was not a



IN A LITTLE WHILE HE HAD THIS FINE, FAT
CHICKEN

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good plan until the case became hopeless, and that would probably not be before some time in the night. Mr. 'Coon said, though, there was no reason why that nice chicken should be wasted, and as it would still be fresh, he would rig up a hook and line and see if he couldn't save it. So he got out his fishing things and made a grab hook and left Mr. Crow to sit by Mr. 'Possum until he came back. He could follow Mr. 'Possum's track to the place, and in a little while he had the fine, fat chicken, and came home with it and showed it to the patient, who had a sinking spell when he looked at it, and turned his face to the wall and said he seemed to have lived in vain.

Mr. Crow, who always did the cooking, said he'd better put the chicken on right away, under the circumstances, and then he remembered a bottle of medicine he had once seen sitting on Mr. Man's window-sill outside, and he said while the chicken was cooking he'd just step over and get it, as it might do the patient good, and it didn't



MR. CROW SAID IF MR. 'POSSUM WAS STILL WITH
THEM NEXT MORNING THEY WOULD SEND
FOR ANOTHER DOCTOR

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seem as if anything now could do him any harm.

So the Crow dressed the nice chicken and put it in the pot with the dumplings, and while Mr. 'Coon dosed Mr. 'Possum with the hot herb tea Mr. Crow slipped over to Mr. Man's house and watched a good chance when the folks were at dinner, and got the bottle and came back with it and found Mr. 'Possum taking a nap and the 'Coon setting the table; for the dinner was about done and there was a delicious smell of dumplings and chicken, which made Mr. 'Possum begin talking in his sleep about starving to death in the midst of plenty. Then he woke up and seemed to suffer a good deal, and the Crow gave him a dose of Mr. Man's medicine, and said that if Mr. 'Possum was still with them next morning they'd send for another doctor.

Mr. 'Possum took the medicine and choked on it, and when he could speak said he wouldn't be with them. He could tell by his feelings, he said, that he would never get

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through this day of torture, and he wanted to say some last words. Then he said that he wanted the 'Coon to have his Sunday suit, which was getting a little tight for him and would just about fit Mr. 'Coon, and that he wanted the Crow to have his pipe and toilet articles, to remember him by. He said he had tried to do well by them since they had all lived together in the Hollow Tree, and he supposed it would be hard for them to get along without him, but that they would have to do the best they could. Then he guessed he'd try to sleep a little, and closed his eyes. Mr. 'Coon looked at Mr. Crow and shook his head, and they didn't feel like sitting down to dinner right away, and pretty soon when they thought Mr. 'Possum was asleep they slipped softly up to his room to see how sad it would seem without him.

Well, they had only been gone a minute when Mr. 'Possum woke up, for the smell of that chicken and dumpling coming in from Mr. Crow's kitchen was too much for him. When he opened his eyes and found

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that Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow were not there, and that he felt a little better—perhaps because of Mr. Man's medicine—he thought he might as well step out and take one last look at chicken and dumpling, anyway.

It was quite warm, but, being all in a sweat, he put the bed-sheet around him to protect him from the draughts and went out to the stove and looked into the pot, and when he saw how good it looked he thought he might as well taste of it to see if it was done. So he did, and it tasted so good and seemed so done that he got out a little piece of dumpling on a fork, and blew on it to cool it, and ate it, and then another piece, and then the whole dumpling, which he sopped around in the gravy after each bite. Then when the dumpling was gone he fished up a chicken leg and ate that, and then a wing, and then the gizzard, and felt better all the time, and pretty soon poured out a cup of coffee and drank that, all before he remembered that he was sick abed and not expected to recover. Then he happened to think, and started back



WHEN THE DUMPLING WAS GONE HE FISHED UP
A LEG AND ATE THAT

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to bed, but on the way there he heard Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow talking softly in his room and he forgot again that he was so sick and went up to see about it.

Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow had been quite busy up in Mr. 'Possum's room. They had looked at all the things, and Mr. Crow remarked that there seemed to be a good many which Mr. 'Possum had not mentioned, and which they could divide afterward. Then he picked up Mr. 'Possum's pipe and tried it to see if it would draw well, as he had noticed, he said, that Mr. 'Possum sometimes had trouble with it, and the 'Coon went over to the closet and looked at Mr. 'Possum's Sunday suit, and pretty soon got it out and tried on the coat, which wouldn't need a thing done to it to make it fit exactly. He said he hoped Mr. 'Possum was resting well, after the medicine, which he supposed was something to make him sleep, as he had seemed drowsy so soon after taking it. He said it would be sad, of course, though it might seem almost a blessing, if Mr. 'Possum

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should pass away in his sleep, without knowing it, and he hoped Mr. 'Possum would rest in peace and not come back to distress people, as one of Mr. 'Coon's own ancestors had done, a good while ago. Mr. 'Coon said his mother used to tell them about it when she wanted to keep them at home nights, though he didn't really believe in such things much, any more, and he didn't think Mr. 'Possum would be apt to do it, anyway, because he was always quite a hand to rest well. Of course, *any one* was likely to *think* of such things, he said, and get a little nervous, especially at a time like this—and just then Mr. 'Coon looked toward the door that led down to the big room, and Mr. Crow he looked toward that door, too, and Mr. 'Coon gave a great jump, and said:

“Oh, my goodness!” and fell back over Mr. 'Possum's trunk.

And Mr. Crow he gave a great jump, too, and said:

“Oh, my gracious!” and fell back over Mr. 'Possum's chair.

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For there in the door stood a figure shrouded all in white, all except the head, which was Mr. 'Possum's, though very solemn, its eyes looking straight at Mr. 'Coon, who still had on Mr. 'Possum's coat, though he was doing his best to get it off, and at Mr. Crow, who still had Mr. 'Possum's pipe, though he was trying every way to hide it, and both of them were scrabbling around on the floor and saying, "Oh, Mr. 'Possum, go away—please go away, Mr. 'Possum—we always loved you, Mr. 'Possum—we can prove it."

But Mr. 'Possum looked straight at Mr. 'Coon, and said in a deep voice:

"What were you doing with my Sunday coat on?"

And Mr. 'Coon tried to say something, but only made a few weak noises.

And Mr. 'Possum looked at Mr. Crow and said:

"What were you doing with my pipe?"

And a little sweat broke out on Mr. Crow's bill, and he opened his mouth as if he were



"WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH MY SUNDAY COAT
ON?"

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going to say something, but couldn't make a sound.

Then Mr. 'Possum said, in a slow voice, so deep that it seemed to come from down in the ground:

"Give me my things!"

And Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow said, very shaky:

"Oh y-yes, Mr. 'Possum, w-we meant to, a-all the t-time."

And they tried to get up, but were so scared and weak they couldn't, and all at once Mr. 'Possum gave a great big laugh and threw off his sheet and sat down on a stool, and rocked and laughed, and Mr. 'Coon and Mr. Crow realized then that it was Mr. 'Possum himself, and not just his appearance, as they had thought. Then they sat up, and pretty soon began to laugh, too, though not very gaily at first, but feeling more cheerful every minute, because Mr. 'Possum himself seemed to enjoy it so much.

Then Mr. 'Possum told them about every-

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thing, and how Mr. Man's medicine must have made him well, for all his pains and sorrows had left him, and he invited them down to help finish up the chicken which had cost him so much suffering.

So then they all went down to the big room and the Crow brought in the big platter of dumplings, and a pan of biscuits and some molasses, and a pot of coffee, and they all sat down and celebrated Mr. 'Possum's recovery. And when they were through, and everything was put away, they smoked, and Mr. 'Possum said he was glad he was there to use his property a little more, and that probably his coat would fit him again now, as his sickness had caused him to lose flesh. He said that Mr. Man's medicine was certainly wonderful; but just then Mr. Rabbit dropped in, and when they told him about it, he said of course the medicine might have had some effect, but that the dumplings and chicken caused the real cure. He said there was an old adage to prove that—one that his thirty-fifth great-grandfather

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had made for just such a case of this kind. This, Mr. Rabbit said, was the adage:

“If you want to live forever
Stuff a cold and starve a fever.”

Mr. 'Possum's trouble had come from catching cold, he said, so the dumplings were probably just what he needed. Then Mr. Owl dropped in to see how his patient was, and when he saw him sitting up, and smoking, and well, he said it was wonderful how his treatment had worked, and the Hollow Tree people didn't tell him any different, for they didn't like to hurt Mr. Owl's feelings.

THE END

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